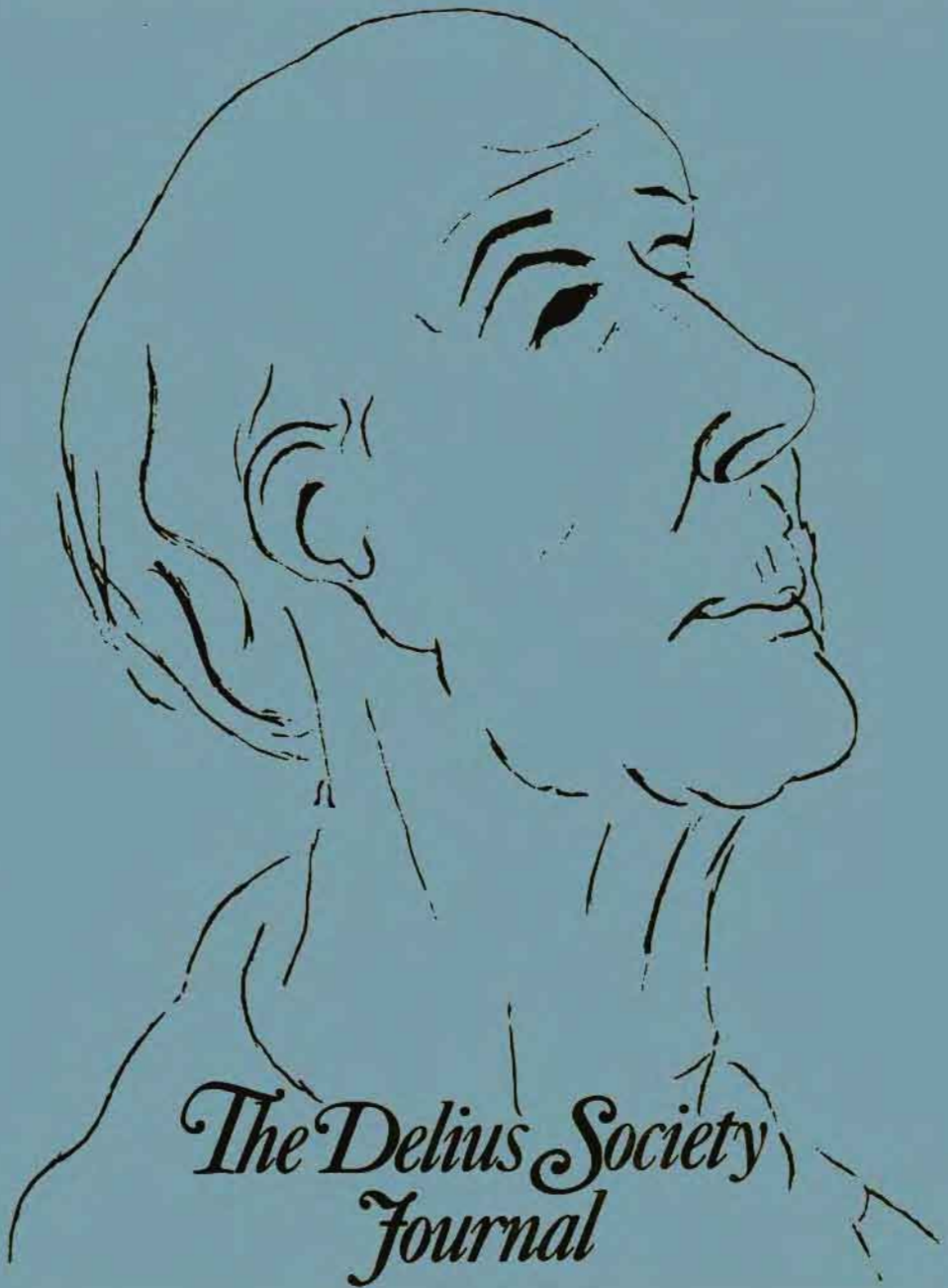
July 1978, Number 60



The Delius Society Journal

July 1978, Number 60

The Delius Society
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The Delius Society Journal

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F Delius by Dawn Redwood (after Kapp)

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EDITORIAL

The most important event since our last issue was the superb performance of *A Mass of Life* by Sir Charles Groves at the Royal Festival Hall on 19th April. By general consent excelling both the previous London performance and the recording by our Vice-President, it came near to being the best live performance I have heard (I never heard Beecham conduct the work). Of Part 1 *The Guardian* said: "...it came over in just the surge of passion that makes this so remarkable among Delius's works, and more than anything explains the positive side of his character so regularly attested to by those who knew him personally". "Sir Charles maintained splendid balance and liaison", wrote *The Daily Telegraph*, adding that Benjamin Luxon "sang most beautifully and often touchingly". Only the other soloists left me disappointed, two of them being inadequate substitutes for those originally announced and billed in our last issue. Most satisfying of all, perhaps, was the fact that the hall was well-filled by an appreciative audience. The peformance was preceded by an illuminating talk by our President, who described the work as "man's reflections through the hour-glass of his life", adding: "I can imagine Delius's dry remarks on framing the title".

* * *

Estelle Palmley writes:

Members will have been shocked to hear of the sudden death, at the age of 49, of David Simmons, the first Chairman of the Delius Society. Others will, I hope, write of David Simmons as a discerning music critic, with a high regard for Delius. I shall always remember him too as a sort of lovable clown, in the Shakespearian tradition.

I recall switching on television one evening and being confronted with a handsome, cheerful bus conductor, whom I instantly recognised as David Simmons in uniform, advertising the Labour Party, of which he was a devoted member. Other members will recall other incidents of a somewhat hilarious nature.

I feel David Simmons has left us a legacy of laughter, and members may wish to send a donation in his memory either to the University of Bradford (for the Delius Centre), or the Delius Society.

Due to an unfortunate memory lapse when writing my account of Eric Fenby's talk on *Elgar and Delius* (*Journal* No. 59) I attributed an anecdote to Edward J. Dent. The source was, in fact, Robert Nichols. My apologies to Dr. Fenby for any embarrassment this error may have caused.

* * *

Congratulations to Julian Lloyd Webber, who must be the first Delius Society member to win a golden disc. This was awarded for his recording of his brother Andrew's *Variations for 'Cello and Rock Group*. Julian was quoted in one paper as saying that he thought the most appropriate place for his golden disc would be to hang it in the loc. Let us hope that he does not follow Max Reger's example!

* * *

News on the recording front is plentiful. Many people have asked why a record of the music of Delius conducted by our President has not been made; they will now be pleased to hear that Eric Fenby is to conduct the Bournemouth Sinfonietta in a recording of the *Sonata for Strings*, the *Fantastic Dance*, the Five Piano Pieces in his own arrangement for orchestra, and the *Air and Dance* and *La Calinda*, both in the arrangements he made for the flute of James Galway. This recording is due to be made in August. The same month should see the recording by the English Sinfonia under Neville Dilkes of the complete *Hassan* music, which is to appear on the Delos label in the USA and Rediffusion in Great Britain. At about the same time the Fitzwilliam Quartet is due to record the Delius and Sibelius String Quartets for L'Oiseau-Lyre. Later in the year Eric Fenby will be in the studio again, this time to record the Violin Sonatas with Yehudi Menuhin; and the Philharmonia Orchestra under Gene Forrell is planning to record the first version of *In a Summer Garden, Paa Vidderne, Fantastic Dance*, and *Caprice and Elegy* (with Ralph Kirschbaum). Two recordings of shorter works by Delius are due for release towards the end of this year: on the Argo label Neville Marriner conducts the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and on the *Classics for Pleasure* label Vernon Handley directs the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The latter contains the first recording of *Sleigh Ride* since the score was published (and also since Beecham's recording). It is sponsored by WD & HO Wills Ltd., and indeed I understand that none of the recordings mentioned has been initiated by the Delius Trust, which can only be a healthy sign as it means that recording companies now see fit to record the music of Delius purely on its own merits.

DELIUS SOCIETY SUBSCRIPTION

At the Annual General Meeting on 13th May the Society subscription was debated. Proposals to increase the current £3 subscription to £4 or to £5 were discussed. Eventually the meeting voted for £5, by a large majority. This will take effect from April 1979. The US subscription will be 10 Dollars, and an equivalent amount for other countries.

The annual subscription was last increased at the AGM in May 1974, so we are only endeavouring to keep pace with inflation. It should now be possible to maintain the level at £5 for a few years, whereas £4 would probably have meant another rise soon after.

The Annual Accounts show that the Society is being administered at relatively small cost and does not spend much of its income on Meetings. About two-thirds of the income is spent on the Journal, which goes to all members and is now an expensive, high quality publication.

Rodney Meadows

In League For The Sake Of Music

BY REGINALD NETTEL

In Journal *No. 56, pages* 22-3, *we reviewed Reginald Nettel's latest book,* North Staffordshire Music: A Social Experiment, *in which the author touched on the short-lived Musical League, whose object it was to hold annual Festivals of two or three days' duration in different towns with programmes consisting of new compositions and neglected works. Local musical resources were to be employed as much as possible and Elgar became President with Delius as Vice-President. The first Festival was held at Liverpool in* 1909 *and despite the rule forbidding the performance of music by members of the committee, one of the concerts included Delius's* Four Danish Songs with Orchestra. *A second Festival was held at Birmingham in* 1912-13, *but after this the League collapsed. The author has now written the article that follows exclusively for the Delius Society Journal.*

When Delius came to England in 1907 he was visited in London by Granville Bantock, who wished to introduce him to influential musicians who might be interested in his music. Who should he choose, then, before Sir Hubert Parry, who certainly had much influence and was strongly in favour of British composers?

The servant who answered the door said, however, that Sir Hubert was not at home. This would have been unfortunate had it been true, but Bantock suspected that they were being put off. He therefore walked Delius round the square until he saw the face of Parry peering through the curtains. That decided it. He strode straight across the square, Delius in tow, and rang the bell again. This time the door was opened by Sir Hubert himself, looking very red in the face. (1)

But why did Parry not want to meet Delius? By all accounts nobody should have been more anxious to meet another British composer. It is one of the mysteries of musical establishmentarianism in the Edwardian period. Was it really the prospect of meeting Delius that annoyed Parry, or the desire not to see Bantock?

Bantock was at that time in charge of the Midland Institute School of Music in Birmingham, a post much inferior to Parry's directorship of the Royal College of Music, but one where the students were being led into modern ways. Bantock also conducted two orchestras — one in Birmingham and one in Liverpool — and had a wish to give modern composers their chance in England. That is why he made friends with Delius and Sibelius, among others. He was, moreover, revitalising the choral societies in Birmingham, which he considered had let Elgar down at the first performance of *Gerontius* in 1900, and who were

(1) This anecdote was told to me by Lady Bantock and confirmed by Prof. Jack Westrup, who got it from Bantock himself.

dragging their feet in the matter of repentance. Associated with him in the work was the critic Ernest Newman, who had a large following, especially in the Midlands and North, due possibly to his trenchancy for speaking his mind, even when prejudiced, as, for example, when he said that Hans Richter could not read a score (2). He also had a rooted dislike of academic judgements.

Failure to secure the support of Parry for the forthcoming performances of Delius's music was not therefore disastrous. The centre of British music, Elgar had said in his first lecture at Birmingham University in 1905, was not London but somewhere further north. This statement was founded on a theory published in 1900 (3), putting forward a claim for the decentralisation of musical activities, making use of the resources of the various provincial districts on much the same lines as the various German towns had their individual musical life. In particular, certain large industrial centres had developed a good choral tradition, and in these such works as *Sea Drift*, *Appalachia* and *A Mass of Life* might get better performances than in London. So thought Ernest Newman, so thought Granville Bantock, and Delius came round to their point of view.

Together they devised an organisation called *The Musical League* — Newman, Bantock and Delius — but the original idea was Newman's. Delius came into it with his knowledge of how things were done at the German musical Festivals at which some of his works had been performed. It was done in a democratic way, with a large committee, according to Bantock and Newman, but Delius had his doubts about democracy:

> The other fellows are there for show in reallity [sic]. You know we must count upon all sorts of intrigue and opposition from the outset, although I don't believe it will amount to much. As soon as we have every gifted musician in our league it will be plain sailing. .....We [Delius, Newman and Bantock] must run the show, my dear boy, and if we can't we are no good — the three of us must be the brain of the league and keep the rudder in our hands, otherwise it will drift about uselessly and with no purpose, as musical things have done for the last 50 years. Both Richter and Wood are clever enough to see of what importance such a league may become. Write me at once about Beecham, if there is anything wrong in that quarter — which I don't believe — we must shove him out. The only way we can succeed is to be of one purpose and uphold each other. (4)

(2) This statement caused Newman's dismissal from the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, but he repeated it without qualification to the present author as late as 1949.

(3) Ernest Newman, *A Case for Decentralisation*, Quarterly Review, October 1900.

(4) Delius to Bantock, from Grez, 16th December 1907. The reference to Beecham is on account of his having become conductor of a choral society in Birmingham which was opposing Bantock's reforms.

Elgar was drawn into the scheme, naturally. He was important as a figurehead but not too keen on committees and conflicts of opinion. Nor was he always responsive to Bantock's rough humour. In fact, since the death of Alfred Rodewald of Liverpool in 1903, Elgar had dropped out of much of the social life of their circle. Bantock was now conducting the orchestra which Rodewald had founded, but Bantock and Delius were now firm friends, as we see from the following letter:

Dear old boy,

I am so pleased you are coming here and am already looking forward to your visit. Don't make it too short! How strange! I am also thinking of giving up composing for painting, and am going to study the nude seriously this summer. We are going to have a model down from Paris, so you will be able to make several serious studies whilst you are here. It is funny that only the female nude seems to inspire my artistic faculty! Bring Newman along if he can come. We can set him to writing music — as he knows so much about it. My study is at his disposal as we two will no doubt spend most of our time among the roses and other flowers in the garden — painting. You must get Elgar to preside at the next meeting. There is nothing important to arrange before the autumn, as a festival this year is quite out of the question. Enclosed a balance sheet of the Allgemeiner deutsche Musik-verein [sic]. Show it to Harding. We must get people to give money to the Musical League and the towns must contribute like they do in Germany. We must get rid of the absurd English idea that everything must pay. Art never ought to pay. Art and artists ought to be paid.....(5)

Delius was grateful also to Bantock for using his influence to get Midland performances of his works. Through Bantock and Havergal Brian a performance of *Sea Drift* took place in Hanley in December 1908. Then in 1909 Delius wrote the following:

My dear Bantock,

I received a letter from Dr. Sinclair of Hereford asking me for a short orchestral work. In reply I proposed my 'Dance Rhapsody', just finished and taking about ten or twelve minutes to play. I suppose this is your doing again. I can tell you that I appreciate it most thoroughly. It will also afford me an opportunity of hearing 'Job' by our mutual friend H.P. How a man rolling in wealth, the lord of many acres, and living off the fat of the land, can write anything about Job beats me entirely. Unless it is a cantata expressing H.P.'s satire at Mr. Job's way of life. I am really curious. (6)

It was largely the persistence of the nineteenth century fashion for dull religious themes which Delius objected to:

When, I wonder, will they give 'The Mass of Life' at an English festival? They are even giving it at several American towns next season, and in Berlin, Munich, Hagen and Hamburg. Oh! my

(5) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 16 June 1908.

(6) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 24 April 1909.

country! Wood tells me he persuaded the Festival Committee to give 'Sea-drift'. Did they want much persuasion? I see the Elijah and Co. are not yet dead in England (7).

But back in 1908 Delius was still hoping to reform the English:

> Schillings made a long speech about the Musical League (in my name) and invited the German musicians to join. This was at the general meeting. Cannot the Committee Meeting be postponed until the end of September? We must on no account give a festival until May or June. Here in Germany the town where the festival is held *always* pays a certain amount of the festival expenses. Otherwise the festival would not be possible. We must absolutely get the municipal authorities to do the same and choose our festival towns accordingly. Mottl was there and is giving my 'Appalachia' and my Piano Concerto in Munich this winter. When I think of Manchester in a fog and a musical festival I shudder. In Germany the towns are so clean and well-built, the concert-rooms so splendid and the whole place so suitable for music that one might risk a festival in winter. But in England — never! When will you be able to come here? Write soon. That clause about "composers on the committee" is certainly idiotic: I have not met one composer who thought otherwise, and in England too! We shall of course have to draw largely from Germany and France. I myself have realised how little there is in England. There isn't much in Germany, but every musician can present his piece with an excellent technique. This is not the case in England, where a decent technique is an exception. With love to you both.

The reference to 'composers on the committee' meant that a certain altruism in the League was going too far. In order to dodge any suspicion of log-rolling the committee (or Newman) had ruled that nobody on the committee should be entitled to have his compositions performed at a League festival. But they were trying to get a committee of the best English composers, so, if the rule were to be applied, they would cut out their best prospects of furthering the cause of British music.

In spite of his misgivings, Delius was present at the committee meeting in October 1908, but Newman and Bantock were not. Newman and Bantock were on the brink of a quarrel, and Bantock, moreover, was ill. For years he had smoked a particularly vile tobacco called by his friends 'Black Jack' (8) and it is to this that Delius refers in the postscript to the following letter:

> Here I am in Grez again. The committee meeting went off very well — the attitude of the grumblers was entirely changed and the Jew boy was absent. It is virtually settled that the Festival

(7) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 3rd June 1912. The festival referred to is Birmingham. *The Mass of Life* had been performed under Beecham in London on June 7, 1909, but not at a festival.

(8) This was one of Bantock's jokes. He would smoke it in an enclosed space for the joy of seeing his friends leave.

takes place in Liverpool — I suppose that you have already been informed of all that took place. Johnstone raised his guarantee from £50 to £100, and, in spite of the fact that O'Neill said he was willing to give £5 towards the Festival, neither Harding nor Agnew offered a shilling. I opposed to pay a secretary £100 a year and offered to find one who would do all the work with pleasure for nothing. Gardiner I believe would accept the post. He gives also £100 towards the Festival if it takes place. I think the League is alright — lots of fellows will join as soon as the advertisement asking for scores and fixing the date of the Festival appears. Of course we only play the works of members of the League. I shall not be able to be present at the next committee meeting, to be held in a month. You must try to be there so that one of us is always on the spot to guard against surprises. Pitt even turned up!! When does 'Omar' come off in London? as I should like to be present if it can be managed. I hope you are all well at home. My wife has got influenza. With love to you both.
P.S. Don't start smoking such a lot again. (9)

The quarrel between Bantock and Ernest Newman was sparked off by Newman's application for the post of Professor of Music at Birmingham University in succession to Elgar, who had just vacated that post and had suggested Bantock as his successor. Newman stated, however, in an interview with the present author, that the cause was that he had adversely commented on a performance in Birmingham with which Bantock was associated, and that he, Newman, could do no other, since the performance was bad. This is unfortunate, for the coincidence of the two facts led Bantock and his friends to believe that Newman was using his influence in the press to discredit Bantock to the detriment of his chances in the academic appointment. Anyway, Newman and Bantock never buried the hatchet, but Delius, of course, was not involved in any of this. He continued to throw all his weight into the organisation of the Musical League:

Dear friend,

Your letter just arrived. Firstly, let me congratulate you on the post of Professor at Birmingham. I was awfully glad to hear it. Bravo! Schillings would be willing to come over and conduct one of his works at our Festival. I think I could also get Gustav Mahler - the finest conductor in the world - to come and conduct one of his symphonies - or choral symphonies. Ravel I can get at any time. If we give a chamber concert, Bax has written a fine quintette. We must bring off a fine and interesting Festival. I shall do my best to come to Hanley (10) and then to Birmingham, as we must spread it all over. We must give a spread of cold meat and beer an evening to get all the members together and make a few speeches - wish the foreign members welcome. They will all join if they see one or two of their musicians on the programme. If Schillings and Mahler come over it would be a splendid set-off. I went to

(9) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 21 October 1908.

(10) For the performance of *Sea Drift*.

Stuttgart for 'Appalachia' and they gave a splendid performance of it. The Queen was there. I am conducting like blazes and beat a better six-eight now. Au revoir, Herr Professor.

P.S. If that influential fellow in Hanley would put me up, I could, I believe, get some money out of him for the Festival. I have to be in London on the 5th Dec., so get the meeting for the 4th afternoon.(11)

The 'influential fellow in Hanley' was T. W. Twyford, the great sanitary pottery manufacturer, who also owned *The Staffordshire Sentinel,* which was doing everything to make the Potteries a centre famous for its choral music, and he was also President of the choir which was foremost in presenting modern compositions in Hanley, and on which Delius was relying. According to Newman's thesis, there were four paths to be opened up for a successful approach to a full musical centre - composers, executants, critics (including audiences) and patrons. (12) Havergal Brian had tried to interest Twyford in the Musical League, but Twyford had somehow got the impression that Brian was trying to get a subsidy for his own music, so he declined. It is doubtful if Delius would have done any better, but he did not know. His insistence, too, that municipalities must contribute to the expenses of a festival, although natural enough in Germany, could only prove impossible in Britain, where the cultural history and legal situations were different. In Germany, princes had kept palatial establishments and vied with each other to develop the arts of music, love and hunting; in Britain, certain health resorts had succeeded in obtaining permission from Parliament to subsidise music from the rates, but the big industrial towns had authority only to impose a one penny rate to subsidise band music in the public parks. Not for another thirty years would it be possible to get central or local government support for a musical festival in these places, and it was in these towns that the Musical League wished to operate, not for social or political reasons, but because they had the halls and the choral resources, and Manchester had the Hallé Orchestra.

There followed a postcard from Grez, dated only 1908, which read:

Dear Bantock,

You will be pleased to hear that Gustav Mahler, Claude Debussy, Vincent D'Indy and Max Schillings will all come and conduct one of their works at our Festival. Mahler's will be a choral symphony. Debussy, D'Indy and Schillings, orchestral works(short). With love and greetings to you all.

On 7th January 1909 Delius wrote again on the same subject, in a letter which contained other matter:

Debussy, D'Indy and Schillings will not fill up more than half a programme. Mahler's Symphony will take one hour of the orchestral concert. So we have any amount of room yet. The Festival ought to be a great attraction and a pecuniary success. Mahler as a

(11) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 21 November 1908.

(12) Newman forgot the importance of education in musical life.

conductor is always a great draw - he is perfectly wonderful. In the symphony I proposed that he should conduct there are many beautiful things. This is No. 2.

If such a programme as that had been given in any town in 1909, that place would have leapt to a distinctive position in British musical life, but it did not happen. For one thing, the foreign composers whom Delius wanted to introduce were not preferred. The festival was to be British.

In April 1908 Delius conducted *Appalachia* in Hanley - not very successfully, but that is well-known now - and in the following December there was a performance of *Sea Drift* in Hanley conducted by Beecham, with his own orchestra and the North Staffordshire District Choral Society. Then followed a performance of *The Mass of Life* with the same choir, but this time in London in June 1909, and the choirmaster, James Whewall, died in November. The first festival of the Musical League took place in the same year in Liverpool. All this came as a result of the desire for decentralisation which Newman had advocated as early as 1900.

There was no quarrel between Delius and Bantock, but their outlook towards the public differed. Bantock was inclined to be democratic as far as this was consistent with his artistic standards; Delius was impatient with the crowd, if not downright authoritarian. In 1909 Bantock gave up the conducting post in Liverpool. Delius noted it in a letter to him dated March 8th 1909:

So you are really giving up Liverpool. I suppose Liverpool wants to imitate Manchester! Things really look rather hopeless in England. What you say about staying away from England may be alright for others, but not for me. What good would it have done me to be on the spot? I know nobody in Birmingham and certainly don't intend to waste my precious time trying to be performed at festivals in England, where one receives an entirely inadequate performance. I should not even have handed in my 'Mass of Life' if you had not asked me to do so. Besides, I am beginning to appreciate what it means. 'The English ears'. Ears that have listened to vulgar and formal and commonplace music for a hundred years without protesting, and which hail, as works of genius, music that belongs to the Mendelssohn period with a litle bit of Wagner thrown in. We shall now see how the League will pan out. If the assistant secretary (a sinecure-in Germany the whole business is done by 'the Treasurer', a very busy business man - there are 800 members in the German society) then the outlook is not promising and the thing will fizzle out anyhow. What you are trying to do in Liverpool, Beecham is trying to do in London at an enormous sacrifice to his pocket.....Beecham ought to be encouraged by every modern and progressive-loving musician in England. He is the most worthy of it. You seem to have something against him - I cannot make out what it is - he is no intriguer. What hast tha gotten agin 'im, lad? He is more musical, modern and progressive

than Ronald, who is an opportunist of the first water and a courtier, and cares as much for music as your gardiner - a weak imitation of Nikisch. We want pioneers, my boy. Men of courage, and not bourgeois. As far as I can judge, one of the characteristics of the English race is want of moral courage. Beecham has this courage in a high degree, and that is why I appreciate him, and recognise in the man the qualities which go towards the making of a big man. There are so few in England of this sort that one ought to try to gather together and unite. I recognised in you what I recognised in Beecham. That is why I should like to see you more united. With best love and wishes for *Omar* 111.

Landon Ronald was coming forward at that time as a new conductor. Bantock trusted him. *Omar Khayyam* was Bantock's most earnest effort to break the stranglehold of the cathedral festival committees, whose bias towards Biblical texts, and early criticism of the way Bantock had treated them, had led him to look to the East for an alternative philosophy. This was the trend of thought at that time, permeating all new music. Delius had turned to Walt Whitman and Nietzche, and his settings of their works were coming forward in England at the time of these letters, (wherein the Nietzchean drive can be discerned lurking constantly behind the lines.) The first of the Musical League festivals, at Liverpool in 1909, brought forward Ralph Vaughan Williams' setting of Whitman's *Towards the Unknown Region* and Havergal Brian's *By the Waters of Babylon,* a biblical text, certainly, but one which proved the rule, for it used the form of the Anglican Church anthem to reveal a direct approach to the most terrible of the Psalms, and one which preceded by nearly thirty years William Walton's setting in the opening of his *Belshazzar's Feast.* There could be no turning back to the idioms which had made the English Bible a bore when allied to music. Delius was right. Bantock and Beecham had the same objects in view even though they were not apparently on good terms, and the objects which stimulated them and the organisers of the Musical League were those which the twentieth century needed.

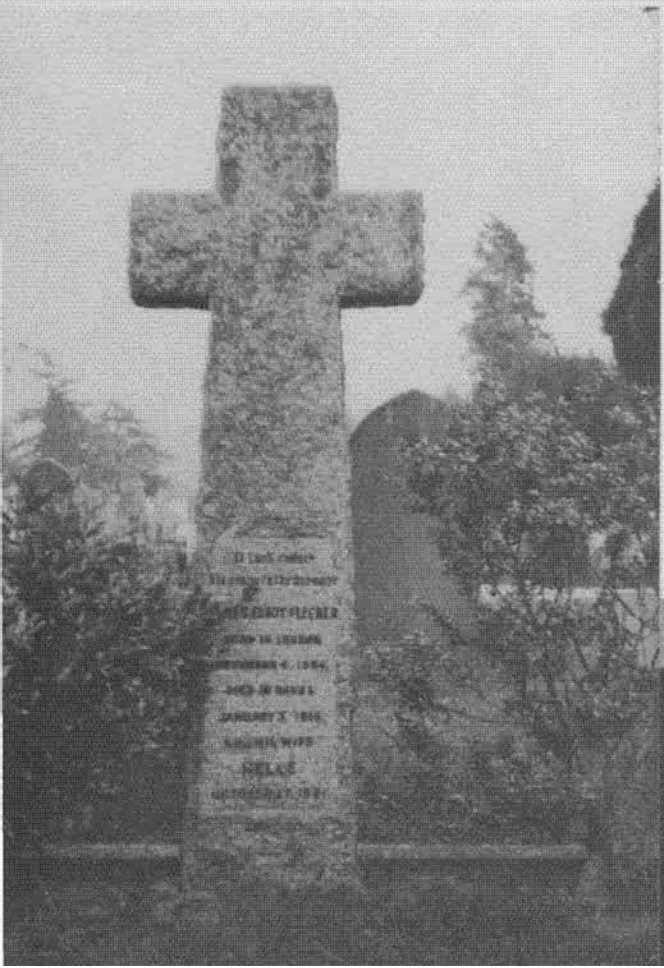
But all philosophy is ambivalent. The Nietzchean urge of Delius - his belief in the superman - presupposed a contempt fo rthe commonplace man. (There is no such creature as 'the common man'). We can best bring this record to a close by quoting the next letter of Delius to Bantock. It has been published elsewhere, but here we have it in its context:

My dear old pal,

Ow can thee axe me what I'es got agin t'ole country? Asn't tha gotten sacked at Liverpool? And you've been poomping and poomping at 'em pretty long and trying to bring a little fresh air into the musical atmosphere, and the question is, Is it worth 'poomping' and spending our energy and strength on a musically apathetic race? I know there are splendidly musical people in England and also lots of courage and enthusiasm, but it is rather thinly spread, and suffocated by the others. You see they really love knocking balls about - either kicking them about or knocking

Margaret de Vesci (left) as Delius knew her, and (below) in 1976.

DELIU SOCIE WEEKE AT STOW-THE-W(



Top left: The party poses outside El Peter Lyons, Mr. N. Jones, Lyndon Middle Row: Miss C. Jones, Mrs. M Estelle Palmley, Mrs. Frank Wilson, R (curator of the Elgar Birthplace); Knee and Dick Kitching.

Lower left: James Elroy Flecker's g

Top right: Some of the party at din

Centre right: Estelle Palmley, Peter delight in the crême caramel prepared hidden).

Lower right: Lyndon Jenkins talks at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ned

Below: The meeting in the Church R row are Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Nettel, Redwood.

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gar's birthplace. Back row: Jenkins and Frank Wilson; . Jones, Mrs. Peter Lyons, by Price and Jack McKenzie lling: Christopher Redwood hotograph by Ned Burgess

ave at Cheltenham.

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Lyons and Dick Kitching by Christine Burgess (partly

o Lionel Carley over lunch Burgess.

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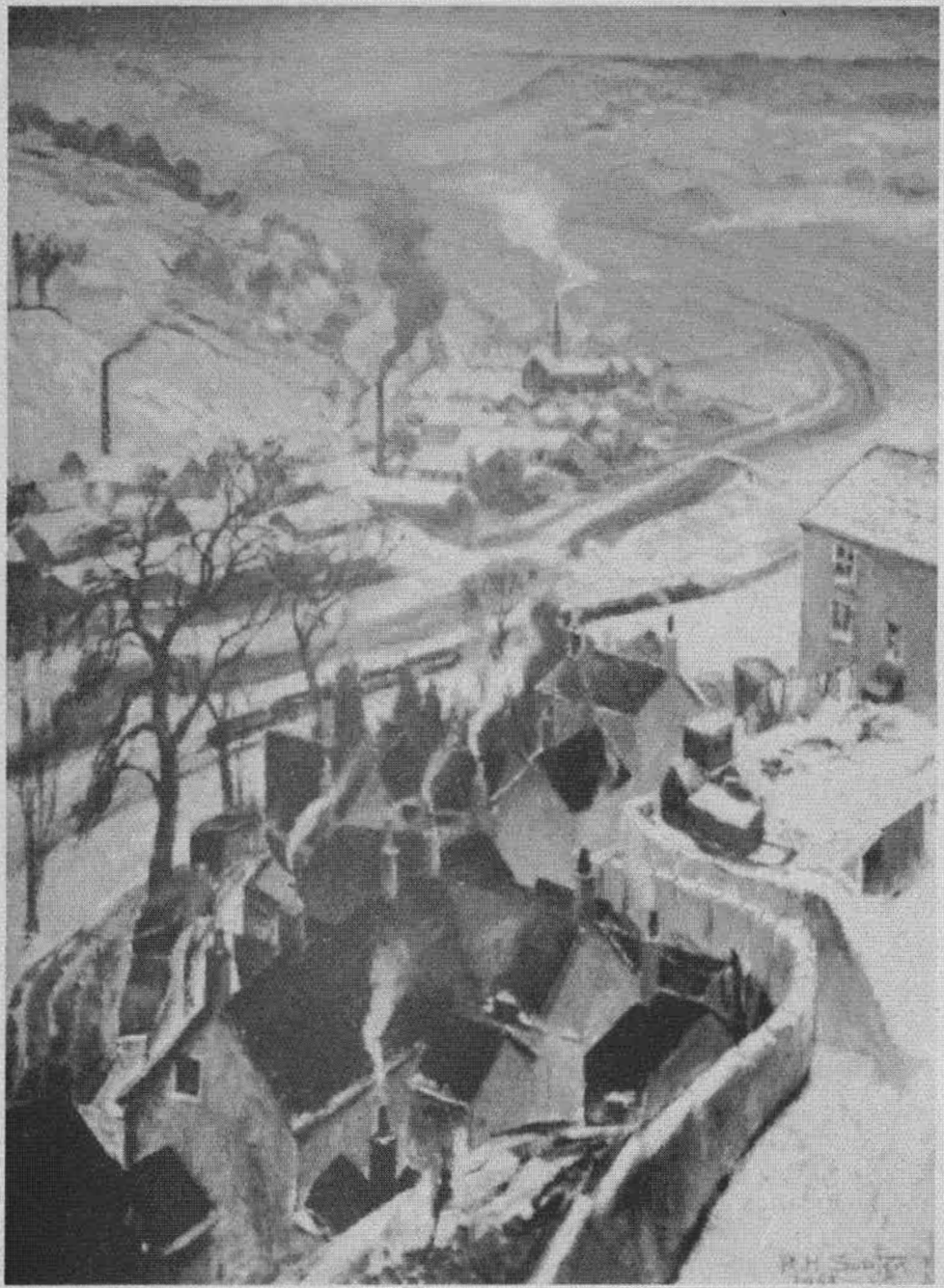

The valley from Fort William, Stroud.
Painting by Rudolf Sauter.

them into holes. And that is devilishly bad for music. Another example. Why did Beecham give a concert in Manchester? Because they had been writing for years about the bad Richter concerts: that they never got anything new etc., (13) Beecham got hundreds of letters asking him to come and give a concert. He did so, and brought that excellent Hanley choir, and there were not 200 people in the Free Trade Hall! His faith in musical Manchester cost him £250.

I believe if we all unite we might create a musical centre and presently through the League we will be able to create a special musical public who will always attend our meetings. I am very glad that you have nothing against Beecham. I never heard him deprecate others for his own glorification. But when we look things in the face he is really almost the only man that we can look to with hope, and who's dead in earnest. The others are making money at any price and pushing their own little affair. What you say about the pioneers may be entirely wrong. *Listen.* You cannot work *for* the best in art and not against the worst - it is entirely impossible. You know that where the place is limited you have to *take away* before you can *add.* The bad and mediocre is always standing in the way of the good and excellent, and the mediocre people are more numerous than the superior people. And therefore when a superior one comes along who has the power and the influence, the first thing he will always do is to *knock* or try to eliminate the bad and mediocre, and not go patting mediocre people on the back simply to get their support. He loves making enemies of fools and incapables. He loves the fight. Opposition. Anything but acquiescence in a rotten state of affairs. In art there never was evolution - it was always revolution against an existing accepted art, which everyone had already got accustomed to. The danger of custom is enormous. 'Habitude'. It destroys all inner perception and sensitiveness. O'Neile is coming here shortly, and will bring me the scores for the festival, I have not seen them yet. Try and arrange to come back with me in June. Perhaps Newman will also be able to come, and we might have a jolly time. I am well on in my new drama *Niels Lyhne.* (14)

(13) There were complaints that Richter kept to well-known German music, which he could conduct from memory. But Richter's sight was failing and he could not see the score clearly on the desk. He resigned in 1911 on account of failing sight. Newman's jibe that Richter could not read a score is explained, but not excused.

(14) Delius to Bantock, Grez, 16th March 1909.

Delius's Last Known Relative

by Christopher Redwood.

'.....and if anyone turns up looking like me and saying their name is 'Delius', dont let 'em in!"
(Delius to Eric Fenby before the 1929 Festival.)

It comes as no surprise to learn of the composer's feelings towards his family, but it is also well-known that there was one member of it for whom he always retained a special affection. This was his sister Clare, four years his junior. Clare had two children, one of whom was killed in action in the First World War. The survivor, Margaret (affectionately known as Peggy), came to meet her uncle on several occasions, and also stayed with him in his last years at Grez. Whilst it would not be very difficult to trace other descendants of the Delius family - Margaret's cousins, for instance - it seems likely that she is the last member of the family who was personally acquainted with the composer.

The first thing that strikes one on meeting Mrs. de Vesci (she has been a widow for many years) is the astonishing resemblance to her uncle, seen best in profile. There is also a similarity in build; although she must surely be more than three-score-years-and-ten she outpaced me as she led the way across Cathedral Green when taking me to lunch in Salisbury, where she now lives, and I was reminded of stories of Delius leaping five-bar gates in healthier days. I was not surprised to learn that she had been a teacher of physical fitness, nor that Jelka had nicknamed her "Daddy Long-Legs" when they went for walks together at Grez! The upper photograph on page 13 shows what a beautiful young woman she was; she was once invited to play the title role in a film of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

Interviewing Margaret de Vesci is not easy: not only does she walk rapidly, but she talks rapidly, too. Moreover, her range of interests is wide: she shares her mother's deeply-held belief in spiritualism, and also studies genealogy, as a result of which she can trace family connections with an astonishing number of important people. She points out that Julius Caesar had red hair and an aquiline nose, and shared the same name as her grandfather. The name of T. E. Lawrence came up; he was a distant relative of her husband, and also a close friend of James Elroy Flecker. He loved "We take the Golden Road to Samarkand", she said, and he played it over and over again. I asked if she had seen the original production of *Hassan*. Yes, she attended it with her mother and Edward, Prince of Wales, whom she had met as an undergraduate at Oxford. She says that Delius was not keen at first to do the music for the play, only agreeing eventually as an act of kindness to Hellé Flecker, although this is not Basil Dean's version. When I asked about Delius's sisters, she reeled off an impressive list of "Tantes", the daughter of one of whom married General Inglefield and was the dedicatee of the book *Letters to an English Gentlewoman*.

I asked whether she had known any of Delius's brothers. She mentioned Uncle Ernest, who was said by his mother to possess as much musical talent as Frederick. Like the composer, he too fell out with his father, and when he was a young man of nineteen he would get Clare to leave a chair for him under the library window so that he might return home later than the stipulated hour of ten o'clock. Eventually he emigrated to New Zealand, dying there a few years before Frederick. It is said that his father once sent him clothing worth several hundred pounds, but Ernest was so embittered that he auctioned the whole lot.

Grandpapa, despite what has been said about him, was really an extraordinarily generous man. When, for instance, he found a starving man near his warehouse he gave him a job delivering coal for the firm. On the other hand he acted entirely in accordance with the custom of the time in refusing to allow his daughter Clare to become a professional musician, and in attempting to act similarly with Frederick. He even considered it bad taste of Joachim and Piatti to suggest that Frederick should join them in a trio to replace an indisposed colleague on that famous occasion at the Delius house.

Did she, I enquired, know anything about *Claremont*? No, only that it was haunted by a black retriever, which her mother had seen. She did, however, know Granny Delius well, and found her sweet. Like her husband she, too, gave money and food generously to poor people. She never spoke of Frederick: she considered it ill-bred to talk about one's own children. This brought us back to the subject of Mrs. de Vesci's uncle and the time she had spent at Grez. How was it occupied? Most of it, it seems, was spent sitting under the fig-tree in the garden and describing the scene to the composer. When he was free from pain he would tell her anecdotes of his earlier days, such as the tale of Uncle Theodor's valet in Paris who, after his master had died, decided to try his patent hair-dye - only to find that it turned his own hair a bright green colour! Another connection with Theodor that is not generally known is that he had a stained-glass window in his Paris apartment which incorporated his initials. In his will he left this to his nephew, who had it removed and transported to Grez, where it became the window on the staircase which looks out onto the street.

Delius also talked of his Florida days and his overseer, Anderson, who had worked as a boy in the cotton fields of Alabama in the days of Abraham Lincoln. Anderson used to bring his banjo to the balcony of Delius's house and sing those songs, which the composer would then write down.

Mrs. de Vesci finds it hard to accept that Delius was not a Christian, for, like his parents, he never refused charity. One day, towards the end of his life, the maid came into the room in a state of great agitation to say that a filthy old man was at the door, giving the name of Halfdan Jebe.

"Bring him in!" cried Delius, pleased at the thought of meeting an

old friend who had led the orchestra at his first London concert.

"But sir," replied the worried girl, "he smells, he is incontinent, and I believe that he is on drugs."

Nevertheless, Delius insisted on inviting Jebe into the house, and would not let him go until he had been provided with a good meal and a change of clothing.

Mention of the domestic staff at Grez prompted me to ask which other members Mrs. de Vesci remembered. She mentioned Cancaneaux, the chauffeur, who she said put the fear of God into all who rode in his vehicle, and Mme. Grespier, the housekeeper, who is said to have taken an inn at Orleans after Delius died.

Delius, she reminded me, had a very strict code of honour: one never lied, one never cheated, and one never grovelled. As we walked back across Cathedral Green and she showed me the spot from which Constable had executed his famous painting, I felt sure that this code had been passed on to his neice, and I felt proud to have met the last relative who had really known him.

Delius Society Weekend at Stow-on-the-Wold

by Roy Price

The week-end of April 14-16 started well. Motoring from Wales to Stow I discovered that the M50 motorway central reservation was a mass of daffodils. The evening looked Delian, with the sun shining strongly to end the day, but there was a cold wind blowing. But the welcome at the Talbot Hotel was warm and friendly. The first people I saw were Christopher and Dawn Redwood, already busily engaged getting around to Society members gathering for the first-ever "Delius Weekend" in Stow. Some were occupied in the dining-room at dinner, whilst others were relaxing in the bar and lounge, after their journeys; and long journeys some of them were, too. Members attended from as far afield as Lancashire, Sussex and London.

New friendships were forged, and old ones renewed. Friday night saw tired Delians making their way to bed, full of anticipation for the morrow; which dawned sunny, but cold and dry. After a delicious breakfast, we left at 9-40, a little late, and journeyed to Worcester, where we stopped in order to see the Cathedral, in particular the Elgar window, "Praise to the Holiest in the Height" — *Gerontius;* and the shop, 1 Severn Street, where Elgar's father had his music shop (now an antique shop). All were surprised that there is nothing to indicate

the Elgar connection there. On to Broadheath, where arrangements had been made for the Elgar cottage birthplace to be opened that morning for our benefit; and what a fascinating place that is! Lots of personal items, plus letters from the great, including one from Delius to Elgar, dated 1934, mentioning *Salome*. But the prize possession must be Elgar's score of his Second Symphony. Mr. McKenzie, the curator, was delighted to see us, and photographs were duly taken outside the door. I left, as I'm sure did others, resolved to return soon.

The convoy of cars sped on to Malvern, where we had planned to see "Forli" where the *Enigma Variations* were composed, but we were late and had to be satisfied with a short outside look at "Craig Lea", Elgar's home from 1899-1904, where he produced *Gerontius, The Apostles, Cockaigne* and the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, and now the object of a preservation appeal. Then another disappointment: we had to miss the visit to the Elgar grave. After a stop at Upton-on-Severn at a hostelry, where members who enjoy real ale had a "quick one" — or was it two?! — on to Cheltenham, where our hosts for lunch were members Chris and Ned Burgess. In their charming house we were overwhelmed with such a spread of food that waistlines were forgotten, and I'm afraid I succumbed too many times to the crême caramel! Quite replete, we made our way to Dean Close School, Cheltenham, where James Elroy Flecker's father was Head, and where Flecker lived for the first few years of his life before leaving for preparatory school. Our last call was to the Flecker grave, again in Cheltenham, although he died in Davos; he was brought back to England to his final resting place, just as Delius was from Grez. Dawn Redwood was on hand to provide answers to questions and information about Flecker and Delius. Dawn's book on this subject is newly published, a *must* for all Delius-lovers.

In between, we briefly visited the house where Gustav Holst was born and lived until he was eight. A charming house, with Holst's piano in the drawing-room, but few personal items; a couple of pictures and several instruments. Again, the curator was helpful, as he was just on the point of leaving when we descended. So Cheltenham is another venue for my diary. After the visit to Holst's birthplace, and as the afternoon was almost gone, we headed back to Stow for an early dinner. This, to enable us to start promptly on the main event of the week-end, an evening of unusual recordings of Delius. Dick Kitching and Lyndon Jenkins kept us fascinated with the Third Violin Sonata played by Albert Sammons and Kathleen Long, songs sung by Nancy Evans, orchestral works conducted by Boyd Neel, Walter Goehr and Sydney Beer, and an extraordinary version of *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* under Beecham with an American orchestra known as 'The Blue Network.'

Sunday morning saw some making the last planned visit to see the house in Stroud where Delius was thought to have lodged whilst working for his father's woollen firm, and going to have coffee at Dr. Lionel Carley's cottage. We were fortunate that Dr. Carley had joined

us for lunch the previous day at Cheltenham, and was kept busy getting around to meet members and answer the many questions put to him.

Several had to forgo these last visits, I in order to return to Wales to see if my cat had left home for good! He had not, and gave me a wonderful welcome, which set the seal on a memorable two days. Let us hope that this is the forerunner to many other similar gatherings. Two members spoke of their plans to try to form new branches of the Society — surely the best way of spreading the word, and more important, the sounds of Delius, in these islands.

One item of interest was of a visit I made some dozen years or more ago to the Old Red Lion, Stow, where I spent a night on my way south. There I met the Rev. Burr, the proprietor. In the hall, hanging on the wall, were two items: some fragments of Delius manuscripts in pencil, one containing the germ of one of the violin sonatas, and a letter from Eric Fenby authenticating the manuscripts. I congratulated Mr. Burr on his generosity in displaying these for all to see and enjoy. In later years I was to visit the hotel just to see these, as well as to take the marvellous teas they served! Alas, it is not possible to see these now, as Mr. Burr has closed the hotel.

Winter Landscape

by Geoffrey G. Hoare.

Not all the mills in the Stroud Valley are, or were, "dark and satanic" — but surely the nineteen year-old Fritz Delius when looking out from his lodging high above Stroud in Gloucester, in the year 1881, might well have imagined he was back home in Bradford? Piloted by Geoffrey G. Hoare, and by courtesy of Mr. D. Oldmeadow, members of the Delius Society on their April 1978 invasion of the Cotswolds were able to stand 'reverently' at this same window, where John Galsworthy's nephew and previous owner of the house, the late Rudolf Sauter, painted the scene during the winter of 1957 (see p.16).

At the time of Delius's visit the house had been occupied for a year by Daniel Baxter, "a woollen merchant's agent", who had purchased it from Holloway Brothers, one of the largest of many local woollen garment manufacturers, who had owned the property since 1855. Until Geoffrey's research sorted things out (see *Journal* No. 54), all previous

scanty local reference had put Delius's six-week sojourn in Stroud at Downfield Villa, now an hotel, a short distance from the town on the Cainscross Road. The only claim here was that the place was owned by families of "Baxters" over a period of sixty years. But the heads of these families were all registered as 'hop merchants', with connections with the brewing industry, particularly in London, and nothing to do with 'wool-gathering' whatsoever.

The scene in Sauter's original oil-painting of 1957 would have differed little from Delius's outlook in 1881, but today so-called progress, planners, and developers have all had their retrograde way. In the valley bottom still operates the Swindon to Gloucester and Cheltenham line (1845) of the former G.W.R. Brunel would turn in his grave if he could see how Sauter had 'switchbacked' his original broad-gauge railroad, towards the top right-hand corner of the picture! The River Frome runs between the railway and the mills that largely depended on it for their water-power. It also acted as a feeder to the more or less parallel, wider and now derelict Thames and Severn Canal, which together with the railway climbs the distant hills, piercing them at considerable depth and length by the famous Sapperton Tunnels.

It would be a reward of effort for G.G.H. if it could be established that the lady shown in the old photograph on page 7 of *Journal* No. 54 was Delius's hostess in 1881 — either Mrs. or a Miss Baxter.

World Premiere of 1890 'Petite Suite D'Orchestre'

The Stratford-upon-Avon College of Further Education was the unlikely-sounding locale for the above event which took place during a most interesting concert given there by the Beauchamp Sinfonietta under Dr. David Tall on Saturday 13 May 1978. Admittedly one of Delius's minor works though it is, the Delius Trust and their advisers agreed that this early score should be heard at least once, and for this purpose manuscript material prepared for Sir Thomas Beecham's use, but never actually played by him, was utilized. David Tall's enthusiasm is not unknown to members of the Delius Society: it will be recalled that in 1964 he was instrumental in getting Mr. Fenby to orchestrate the *Five Piano Pieces*, and a Knowledgeable article on this project appeared in *Journal* No. 56, July 1977. Under his sensitive and capable direction a warm performance of the little 1890 Suite was ensured. Less strongly characterized than other compositions of the

earliest period already introduced, such as *Florida, Sleigh Ride, March Caprice* and *Summer Evening,* this short work nonetheless made a pleasing impression, to which conductor's and orchestra's evident careful preparation and colourful execution contributed not a little. The first movement, despite rather Grieg-like modal and chromatic turns, had a few Delian fingerprints; the second — a somewhat repetitive number where changing instrumentation of and around a little melodic fragment was the chief feature — revealed rather less. The third movement, in a 6/8 lilting rhythm and in a key far removed from its predecessors (E major from G minor) was easily the most characteristic, not least in the eloquent horn notes near the end.

The programme, which had started with a workmanlike performance of Rossini's overture *The Silken Ladder,* marked by accurate woodwind intonation, continued with Handel's Harp Concerto. This was charmingly played by Helen Farrell, who achieved no small success both in the characteristic dynamic shadings of the outer movements and in singing the gravely beautiful melodies of the central *larghetto.* After the interval, a real discovery was the reconstruction by Denis Brearly (one of the orchestra's excellent oboists) of Mozart's C minor wind serenade into a Symphony for full orchestra. Enabling us to savour the varying hues of Mozart's kaleidoscopic wind scoring (plus added flutes) without forgetting the added colours of his string quintet version, it ended in a style more appropriate than either of its composer's own versions, in a triumphant C major with trumpet and drum fanfares. A valuable contribution to the repertory, one hopes this score will find the repeated performances and the wider distribution it deserves.

In the Elysian Fields, later in the evening, Delius and Beecham managed to break away from Ernest Newman, who was still expatiating at some length on his latest Wagner discovery. Delius was rather less enthusiastic than his English audience about his latest premiére, though secretly pleased that even so modest a work should be so affectionately handled. Beecham, delighted that the orchestral parts he had prepared two decades ago had at last been used, was more forthright: "A magnificent programme, my dear fellow," he said; "I'll conduct the whole thing again myself after dinner tonight."

"Splendid, Thomas," said Delius, rather laconically. "Sit down and have a cigar."

Robert Threlfall.

"A Mass of Life" in Somerset

A REMARKABLE tribute to the musicians who presented Delius's "A Mass of Life" recently in Taunton has been received from Mr Ralph Nicholson, director of the County School of Music at Guildford, Surrey.

Saying that he drove on a round trip of 320 miles to hear the performance, which was given at Huish's Grammar School by the Somerset Opera Group and Orchestra. Mr Nicholson admits that he knew nothing about the society or "its enterprising and persuasive" conductor, Brian Cresswell. He came for two reasons—his daughter was playing in the orchestra and he loves the music of Delius. He describes "A Mass of Life" as one of the composer's greatest and most complex works.

Mr Nicholson continues: "This work needs tremendous forces, with usually a choir of anything from 250 up to 800 voices.

"Mr Cresswell had nothing like such forces. His orchestra of 57 did contain, to mention but a few, six horns, two harps and such an exotic instrument as the hecklephone; but his choir, which is divided into two, was only 52 strong, with three tenors in each choir and six bases.

"I could not help wondering what I had let myself in for. After less than a minute any fears were dispelled and I was sitting on the edge of my seat elated by a quite superb opening where the sopranos are expected to sing top As, Bs and even Cs. This they did with precision, Clarity and perfect intonation, as though this was their staple fare and not, say "The Messiah".

'The whole performance aided by the splendid acoustics of the Huish's school hall was one of sustained excellence from the first-rate orchestra to the four excellent young professional soloists from London, Caroline Friend, Patricia Taylor, Julian Pike and Stephen Roberts. Often they had to sing with almost Wagnerian projection to penetrate the massive sound of the full orchestra.

"It would be invidious to single out any one of these fine artists but mention must be made, since he really took the brunt of the many solos, of the refined and deeply felt singing of Stephen Roberts.

"Few of that audience could have experienced a live performance of 'A Mass of Life' before. The spontaneous reception at the end of this two-hour concert showed that there must have been many converts to the music of our great English composer Delius, on Saturday night.

"As one who had the thrill of playing Delius under Sir Thomas many years ago, I should like to say—hoping not to sound patronising — that I think Somerset in general and Taunton in particular should feel proud of such enterprise, especially of Mr Cresswell's vision and faith in such a worthwhile venture, and I hope they will continue to receive the fullest support in whatever they plan for the future".

(Reprinted from *The Somerset County Gazette*, 28th April 1978.)

NEWS FROM THE MIDLANDS

On the 29th October 1977 Lyndon Jenkins repeated a talk which he had already given to London members entitled *The Art of Interpreting Delius*. He illustrated his talk not only with musical examples but with the scores projected onto a screen, thus enabling the audience to see clearly the orchestration of the particular portion of the work under discussion. The examples were a revelation — in particular one wondered how the scrambled and unbalanced final bars of the *First Dance Rhapsody* in one well-known performance could possibly have been passed by the conductor.

On the 3rd December Stephen Lloyd led us into what was for most of us completely uncharted territory when he talked about Balfour Gardiner. As often happens in such cases we find that virtually the only survivor of his works appearing in the concert hall nowadays (*Shepherd Fennel's Dance*) is not at all his best or most characteristic piece. *April, Philomela* and the String Quartet are all worth hearing and show that Gardiner should not only be remembered as Delius's friend and the generous patron of many other English composers.

We are now looking forward to the visit on the 10th June of Mr. and Mrs. Fenby, who have very kindly offered to brave the cultural deserts of the Midlands to meet our members. This will certainly be the high spot of our year (and, indeed, of the decade) and we only hope they will enjoy the visit as much as we shall.

R. B. Kitching.

Correspondence

AUBREY BRAIN

Dear Sir,

I read with great interest the article by Leslie Bond in the March number of the *Journal* on Beecham's recording session for Delius's *Paris*. Having lived with that glorious record for so many years, and more recently making what amounts to a re-discovery of it in the splendid LP transfer by Anthony Griffith, I found it fascinating to have an eye- and ear-witness account of its birth.

I was, however, puzzled by Mr Bond's reference to the presence of Aubrey Brain among the orchestra on that occasion, presumably as first horn. Although the first time that I heard the LPO live was not until 1935 — the famous concert at the re-opening of the Dome, Brighton, when Sir Thomas broke the window of his dressing room with his umbrella, complaining of insufficient ventilation — when the first horn *was* Charles Gregory, we have the evidence of Thomas Russell's *Philharmonic Decade* that from 1933 until 1943 the LPO first horn was Charles Gregory throughout. During the same period Aubrey Brain was first horn of the BBCSO. At this time I believe all the BBCSO players had full-time contracts, and it seems improbable that Brain would have been able to free-lance with the LPO at the same time. Incidentally, Sidonie Goossens was first harp of the BBCSO at this time, so her presence at the session is also problematical, unless she came to hear her sister Marie and the LPO second harp, Julia Wolfe!

Immediately after reading Leslie Bond's article I got out the LPO record and played it, with unalloyed pleasure, for the umpteenth time, carefully following the first horn line in my score, and I must say that the first horn *sounded* just like Charles Gregory's tone as I remember it from the concert hall and many old LPO records. He played a wide-bore instrument with its characteristic 'bloomy' soft-grained tone, while Aubrey Brain, who like all the BBC horns of that era played a narrow-bore instrument, produced a rather brighter, narrower tone. Only at fig. 18 for a few bars did the recorded sound of the first horn seem to me to match that of Aubrey Brain.

It would be interesting to hear from any surviving members of the 1934 LPO just who was at the first horn desk on 9 April.

Petworth, Sussex. Peter Longhurst.

P.S. By the way, the correct date of the 1946 performance of *A Mass of Life*, at which Francis Russell sang in place of Frank Titterton, was 11 December.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

8th September at 7.30 p.m.
Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London. The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, conductor Norman del Mar play *Paris* (Delius) and Symphony No.1 (Walton).

October 19th at 1.05 p.m.
In the Central Library Theatre, Bradford (also broadcast on Radio 3), Julian Lloyd Webber and Simon Nichols play 'Cello Sonatas by Delius and Rachmaninov.

26th October at 7.30 p.m.
Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, London WC1. Speaker: Dr. Eric Fenby.

November 2nd at 1.05 p.m.
In the Central Library Theatre, Bradford (also broadcast on Radio 3), song recital by Felicity Lott (soprano) and Graham Johnson (piano). Four English Songs by Delius, and others by Grieg and Grainger.

November 16th at 1.05 p.m.
In the Central Library Theatre, Bradford (also broadcast on Radio 3), recital by Ralph Holmes (violin) and Geoffrey Pratley (piano) including Sonata No. 3 and *Lullaby for a Modern Baby* by Delius.

November 30th at 7.30 p.m.
Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, London WC1. Christopher Redwood presents a lecture-recital on the songs of Roger Quilter, Delius and their contemporaries, with Robert Threlfall (piano).

December 14th at 1.05 p.m.
In the Central Library Theatre, Bradford (also broadcast on Radio 3), concert by the Medici String Quartet including quartets by Haydn and Delius.

It is understood that the Welsh National Opera Company has postponed indefinitely it's plans to stage *A Village Romeo and Juliet* next year.